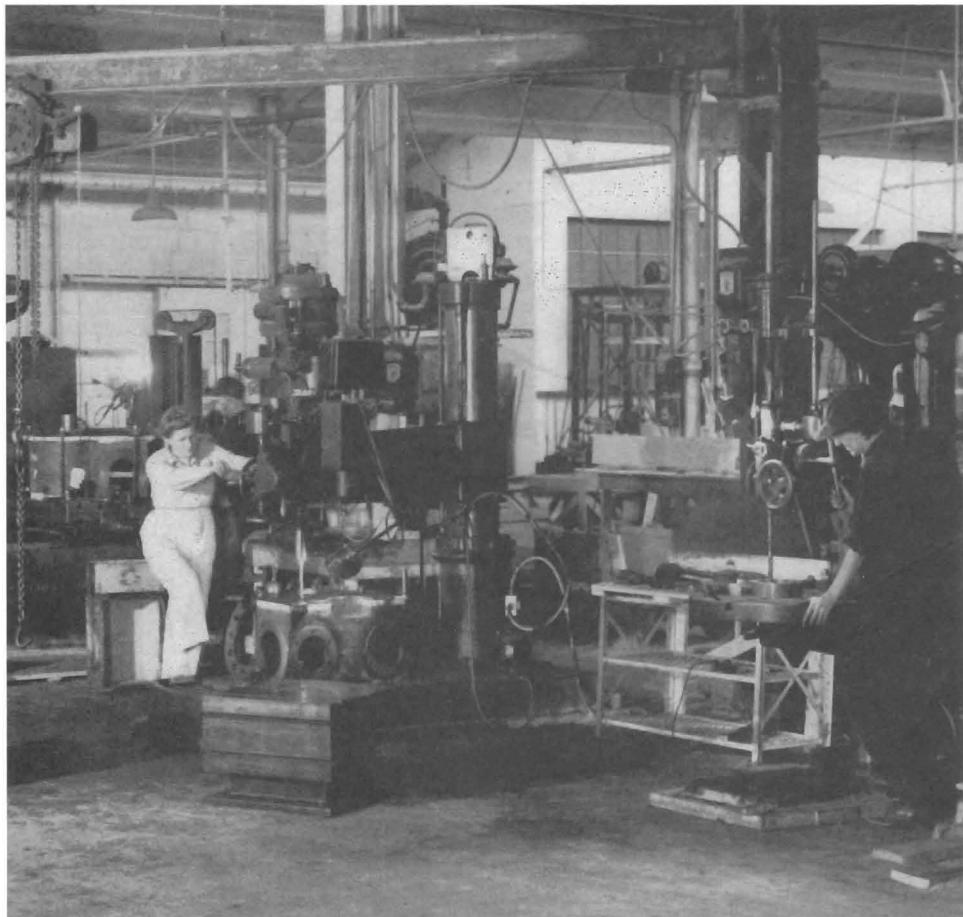


RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*Quarterly*

VOLUME 42 NO. 2

2012

## The Vermont Marble Company Goes to War



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

*Women joined men in the company shops during the WWII conversion from marble to metal.*

# About the Author



MARY FREGOSI

Mary H. Fregosi is a retired educator from Proctor and a member of the Rutland Historical Society who has written: "The Vermont Marble Company Strike of 1935-1936" (Vol. 32 No. 3), "A History of the Proctor Y.M.C.A. and the Sutherland Club" (Vol. 33 No. 1), "When the F.B.I. Came To Town: One of Vermont's Mysteries" (Vol. 38 No. 2), "Building the Proctor Marble Bridge: Conflict and Controversy" (Vol. 38 No. 3), "The Vermont Marble Company Stores" (Vol. 40 No. 2) and "The Vermont Marble Company Strike of 1966" (Vol. 42 No. 1). Mary is a Proctor native who has also written a history of

the Proctor-Pittsford Country Club and a history of Proctor High School boys' basketball.

## Introduction

Employees at the Vermont Marble Company were working on the largest contract in its history with the exception of the Supreme Court when war broke out in Europe in 1939. The \$1,280,428.00<sup>1</sup> Jefferson Memorial brought some challenges that the Company had to overcome but with its completion in 1941 no one could quite envision the challenges and the transformation that lay ahead for this marble giant.

In early 1940 the Company, the largest employer in Vermont, found itself with no sizable projects in the future. In order to meet projected profits and to sustain employment levels, Redfield Proctor, along with his top executives, began to explore refocusing some of his operations from marble to metal.

---

<sup>1</sup> D. H. Bixler, Report of the General Sales Manager, *1941 VMCO Annual Report* (here-in cited as *Annual Report*), p. 1.

The *Quarterly* is published by the Rutland Historical Society, 96 Center Street, Rutland VT 05701-4023. Co-editors: Jim Davidson and Jacob Sherman. Copies are \$2 each plus \$1 per order. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to the *Quarterly* and the *Newsletter*. Copyright © 2012 The Rutland Historical Society, Inc. ISSN 0748-2493.

# The Vermont Marble Company Goes to War

## By Mary Fregosi

In 1940 the Company began to experiment with machine work in the Proctor machine shop. This type of work was not new for the Company. During World War I employees turned out large quantities of floor plates, marine engine bases, condensers, and winches. In February of that year the machine shop started to plane castings for Jones and Lamson of Springfield, Vermont. Defense work in 1940, however, represented only 1.1% of the Company's business but that would soon change.<sup>2</sup> In order to separate the machine from the marble business the Company created the Sutherland Manufacturing Company.

In July 1940 three marble planers were overhauled and fitted so they could be used to plane iron. Planing of the first castings started on 22 July 1940. A carborundum machine was rebuilt to use for iron<sup>3</sup> and a diamond saw was made into a drilling machine in 1941.<sup>4</sup>



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

*Metal castings fill the old marble facility.*

<sup>2</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report, 1942 *Annual Report*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Almo Tenerani, Exterior Shop Report, 1940 *Annual Report*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Almo Tenerani, Exterior Shop Report, 1941 *Annual Report*, p. 6.

By comparison with other companies, the Vermont Marble Company had a small engineering department but what it lacked in numbers it made up for in the machine shop crew that had some experience in installing and repairing equipment. Redfield Proctor, company president, observed that, "This experience combined with the Yankee ingenuity which life in New England develops in most of us, if it is not actually born in us, has been an invaluable asset."<sup>5</sup>

Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act in March of 1941. This action prompted bidders, eager for defense contracts but whose production demands greatly exceeded their potential, to look for outside assistance.<sup>6</sup> The Company then began to convert its operations from marble to metal work in other plants. Henry A. Collin, chief engineer at the Company, had begun to establish contacts with machine tool builders. As America shifted from neutrality to become the "Arsenal of Democracy" for the allied nations, other Company men in the office and in the sales force were assigned to explore war requirements. This work involved extensive travel in order to seal deals for defense orders.

But the Company had many factors in its favor when it began its conversion process. Its shops were large and could accommodate heavy machinery necessary for the types of jobs it could contract. It also owned its own electric plant and railroad. The first thing the Company had to do was to decide on the types of projects it could handle and then it needed to convince contractors that it could do the job.<sup>7</sup>

Drastic changes in the Company's operations occurred throughout 1941. Almo Tenerani, superintendent of the exterior shop, reported that on 1 January 1941, 63 employees worked in his department, four of whom were engaged in defense work. By the end of the year 62 men were engaged in war work and 42 in marble operations. Thirty-six carvers, stone cutters, sandrubbers, waxers, and polishers were turned into defense workers. Three shifts operated 24 hours a day in the exterior plant.<sup>8</sup> The machine shop stepped up its work as well, with 99 men working 48 hour weeks on defense.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Report of Engineering Department, *1940 Annual Report*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Henry A. Collin, Report of the Engineering Department, *1941 Annual Report*, p. 1.

One can only imagine the adjustments these marble workers had to make. Accustomed to straight edges and carpenter squares, operators now had to use micrometers and other precision tools and had to think in thousandths of an inch. Machinery originally designed for work on stone within tolerances of one-eighth to one-sixteenth of an inch had to be rebuilt and trued within tolerances of one to five thousandths of an inch.<sup>10</sup>

Undeterred by the challenges presented in the transition, Company officials and workers devoted themselves to getting the job done. Throughout 1941 visiting engineers and government officials who initially felt this venture would fail, expressed amazement and admiration for the Company's successful conversion.<sup>11</sup>

In his 1941 annual report H. L. Smith, head of industrial development, noted that sales in defense work totaled \$159,000.00. He also enumerated several projects undertaken during the year. To inform the reader of the type and variety of these contracts a brief list is included here:

- 25 hydraulic milling machines for Automatic Machinery Manufacturing Co. of Bridgeport, CT
- 114 bases up to 26 feet long for various types of lathes for producing gun barrels for Builders Iron Foundry of Providence, RI
- 400 pieces for automatic lathes for Potter and Johnson of Pawtucket, RI
- 33 side panels for knitting machines for Textile Finishing Machine Co. of Providence, RI
- Tongs for handling shells for Watertown Arsenal
- 30 pairs of bolted bases for lathes for machining gun barrels for Baush Machine Co. of Springfield, MA
- 53 pieces for mine sweepers for Sandy Hills Iron and Brass Works of Hudson, NY
- 200 ship fenders turned out of spruce for the Maritime Commission for use on cargo vessels
- Machining packing boxes for steam turbines for General Electric of W. Lynn, MA

---

<sup>10</sup> Harold Ladd Smith, Report on Industrial Development, *1941 Annual Report*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

- Thousands of assorted items for various machine tools machined for Jones and Lamson Co. of Springfield, VT<sup>12</sup>

To undertake these types of jobs the Company needed to acquire additional equipment; however, it bought very few machines with its own capital. It got 16 metal working machines for \$78,903.00 under a Certificate of Necessity that enabled the Company to depreciate these at 20% a year. It also added 19 new or used machines totaling \$148,556.00 on which the Company paid a 12% rental under the Defense Plant Corporation, an agency of the federal government. The U.S. Navy also loaned the company seven machines valued at \$12,000.00.<sup>13</sup>

During 1941 the defense work was confined to the machine shop, the old exterior shop and a part of the new exterior shop. The attack on Pearl Harbor heightened the Company's resolve to do its part to win the war and committed all of its facilities and resources to that end.<sup>14</sup> By December 1942 the whole capacity of the machine shop and old and new exterior shops as well as the Center Rutland finishing shop, the West Rutland machine shop, and the Florence plant and mill were being occupied by war work.<sup>15</sup>

Not only was there new equipment in the shops but there were some new hires with familiar faces that began to appear in the shops. In the Company's monthly newsletter, *Marble Chips*, an article entitled "Back to Work" indicated that several retirees had returned to work to support the war effort by taking the place of those employees who had entered the service. In a fervid spirit of patriotism the writer described the transformation that occurred in the building shop (old exterior shop). "With no fanfare and very little shouting a parade of marble blocks was removed from the shop and machines of all sizes, shapes, and uses took their place. And now these machines grind on through the day and night, shaping, planing, drilling and boring heavy castings and machine parts that are so quickly and urgently needed to keep our ships on the ocean, our planes in the air and guns in the hands of our

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-6.

<sup>13</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report entitled "Marble Workers - 1942 Style", *1942 Annual Report*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace M. Fay, "Report of Industrial Development and War Work", *1942 Annual Report*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace W. Fay, "Report of Industrial Development and War Work", *1943 Annual Report*, p. 3.

good sailors, soldiers, and marines.”<sup>16</sup>

To train individuals to run the machines and to do other necessary tasks involved in war work the Company organized a school for blue-print reading and machine operations. This trade school started on 7 July 1942, with the federal government, the Vermont State Vocational Department, and the Vermont Marble Company cooperating in its maintenance.<sup>17</sup> It was located on the second floor of the old cooperative store building in what now houses the post office and apartments.

Three hour classes were offered six days a week at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Here people learned how to operate lathes, engine lathes, turret lathes, shapers, planers, millers, tool grinders and drills. W. M. Duprey, a retired machinist, was in direct charge of the classes, assisted by Richard Herbert of Barstow Memorial School who supervised the instruction. E. L. Rowe, Jr., also of Barstow Memorial School, taught the blue-print classes.<sup>18</sup>

The drain on manpower by the armed services made employment of women a necessity. To this point in the Company's history, women were employed in the offices. This pattern would soon change. In September 1942 women began to attend defense work classes. Among the first women to enroll were Mrs. John Shand, Mrs. A. B. Anderson, Mrs. Sigur Nelson, Mrs. Hercules Zambelli, Miss Laura Canapa, and Miss Leah Franzoni. My aunt, Roma Saceric, nee Ravellini, was in the third class that learned how to operate various machine tools.<sup>19</sup>

Redfield Proctor noted that the inclusion of women in the work force was the most startling of the changes that occurred in his company at the time yet he expressed great admiration for them. “They are thoroughly interested in the work and are altogether earnest about it. We are keen to increase the number. The difficulty is to procure business of the right character. Most of the present work is too heavy for women to handle.”<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> “Back To Work”, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VI No. VIII, October 1942, pp. 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> “Trade School”, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VI No. VIII, October 1942, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> “Women in War Work”, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VI No. IX, November 1942, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report entitled “Marble Workers - 1942 Style”, *1942 Annual Report*, pp. 5-6.

Proctor was understandably proud of the town as well as his company. He acknowledged the young men and women who had left their jobs or had aborted their education to do their part in the war. Further he noted that his workers enthusiastically supported the purchase of war bonds to the point where minute men war bond flags had been awarded to the Center Rutland and Proctor plants. These were awarded based on the percentage of employees that purchased bonds.<sup>21</sup>

War work in 1942 totaled \$1,407,943.00 or nine times that of 1941. This represented an increase of 1,120%.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, when considering monthly war shipments that year, one cannot help but be in awe of the quantity of work produced by the Vermont Marble Company. War work shipments in January 1942 totaled \$23,411.00; by June, they had more than doubled in value and reached their peak of \$323,046.00 in November.<sup>23</sup>

Statistics for the old and new exterior shops give the reader a better picture of how part of the above shipment sales was achieved. In December 1941 13,050 estimated hours were dedicated to planing as opposed to 52,800 estimated hours a year later. Milling hours went from 600 to 7,300 estimated hours, and drilling from 1,000 to 6,200.<sup>24</sup> Seventy-eight men were employed at the beginning of 1942, 42 of whom were machine operators. By the beginning of 1943 there were 143 employees in the exterior shops, 93 of whom were devoted to war work.<sup>25</sup>

A major reason for the Company's success was the training made available to workers who had to convert to working with metal. The trade school apprentices were placed with experienced operators until they became familiar with the operation of the machine, had a general idea of the work to be done as well as the tools with which to do it. After a time, the supervisor assigned the individual to a machine that did simple work and one that required a low degree of accuracy. When he felt the apprentice could handle more difficult work he was assigned a different machine. In this manner, errors were kept to a minimum. For

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Wallace M. Fay, Industrial Development and War Work, *1942 Annual Report*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Barton N. Reissig, Exterior Shop Report, *1942 Annual Report*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

example, spoilage due to errors in machining amounted to one twenty-fifth of one percent by weight of the material shipped in 1942.<sup>26</sup>



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

*The Florence plant worked with wood for planes and gliders.*

A small department, but one dedicated to war work, was the Florence plant. Great quantities of spruce were necessary to make wooden planes and gliders. The spruce had to come from old growth timber and in Vermont it was only available in the National Forest and in Essex County. The Company purchased wood from the National Forest and made arrangements to take all available stock from there. The timber was hewn by small operators and brought to Florence where it was cut into the needed sizes. The Company also began negotiations with the Blair Veneer Co. of North Troy, Vermont that owned most of the spruce supply in Essex County. This phase of war work presented a series of difficulties. Initially the Company had trouble selling the small sizes of good aircraft stock, mainly due to the Office of Price Administration that had not as yet worked out a proper price.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace M. Fay, Report on Industrial Development and War Work, 1942 Annual Report, pp. 4-5.

The Center Rutland shop worked on engine lathes, turret lathes, drills, grinding machines, milling machines, boring machines and equipment for testing completed winches. In 1942 workers built 20 gear shaper machines and assembled 15 more and was in the process of working on a big contract for 608 ship winches. Ninety men, most of whom were transfers from the interior marble operations, worked in this shop.<sup>28</sup>

Defense work required that the Company's facilities be secure. To that end, two guards were posted at the Proctor plant, one from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p. m. and one for the next twelve hour shift. The same was true at Center Rutland. During the summer and fall the Company stationed additional guards at the swing bridge near the Sutherland Falls in Proctor.<sup>29</sup>



*By October 1943 300 women worked in the mica department.*

In 1943 women in large numbers got their opportunity to serve the war effort when the Company obtained a mica contract. Up until June of that year there were some women employed at the Center Rutland shop operating small machine tools and some women operated cranes

<sup>28</sup> A. A. Cook, Center Rutland Shop Report, 1942 *Annual Report*, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> F. C. Thomas, Carpenter Shop Report, 1942 *Annual Report*, p. 2.

in the plants. There also were women working in the shop offices and in Florence operating woodworking machines.<sup>30</sup>

The mica department was first located on the second floor of the store building. In December 1944 this operation would be moved to the second floor of the monumental building. By the end of September 1943 300 women worked in this department. Given this figure as well as those women employed in the shops and in the main office, women comprised 25% of the payroll in 1943. In his annual report for that year Proctor wrote, "Our mica work came as a surprise and has been gratifyingly successful, though we still regard it as a temporary venture. It indeed was an adventure for us to go into anything the manufacture of which would so largely and so successfully be done by women."<sup>31</sup>

Tanks, planes and radios all had essential parts made with mica. Sheets of mica had to be split by hand. Once split they were sorted according to different thicknesses and then with electric or foot operated punches were cut to the final sizes which could be as small as one-half inch by three-quarter inch.<sup>32</sup>

The shops were busy places during the war years. Shifts worked round the clock turning out tools and equipment essential to an allied victory. Everyone sensed the urgency in accomplishing his or her job and their dedication did not go unrecognized. Sunday, 18 July 1943, would prove to be one of the proudest days in the history of the Vermont Marble Company. On that day it was formally awarded the Army-Navy "E" Award. The award consisted of flags to be flown above the plants and a lapel pin for all employees. When the *N.Y. Herald Tribune* reported that only 3% of the war working industries achieved the record that earned the award, it made the accomplishment seem even more impressive.<sup>33</sup>

On that day from 2:00 p.m. on, the Marble Exhibit and all the shops were open for the public's inspection. At 2:30 p. m. the Proctor Band, assisted by some members of the Rutland City Band, gave a two hour

---

<sup>30</sup> Wallace M. Fay, "Women in Our War Plants", *Marble Chips*, Vol. VII, No. VIII, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report, 1943 Annual Report, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Wallace M. Fay, "Women in War Work", *Marble Chips*, Vol. VII, No. VIII, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> "The 3 Percent", *Marble Chips*, Vol. VII No. VIII, p. 2.

concert. Following this entertainment, the chimes of the Union Church played until 4:50 p.m.<sup>34</sup>

The crowd of some 2500 people then congregated in an area of the shop yard where a stage had been set up under a large tent. On the platform were such notables as Governor Wills, Senators Warren R. Austin and George D. Aiken, and Congressman Charles A. Plumley as well as several army and navy men and branch managers.<sup>35</sup>



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

*Proctor crowd celebrating the award of the Army/Navy "E" Flag.*

At precisely 5:00 p.m. Mortimer Proctor, vice-president of the Company and Lt. Governor of Vermont, opened the proceedings as master of ceremonies. Brigadier General Burton R. Lewis, district chief of the Boston Ordnance District, made the formal presentation. He said in part, "In many respects you have accomplished the impossible by your ingenuity in converting from peacetime marble work to the shaping of metal and assembly of machinery so vital to the war effort...We are also deeply appreciative of the conversion that has taken place within yourselves. Your skills were developed in marble. These skills were

<sup>34</sup> Wallace M. Fay, "T'was a Great Day", *Marble Chips*, Vol. VII, No. VI, August 1943, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

converted by determination and hard work until today you qualify as experts in a hitherto unrelated field.”<sup>36</sup>

On that day, Redfield Proctor credited his employees who were the primary reason the Company got the recognition. “What really has made our venture possible has been the interest, serious determination and sincere desire to learn new and completely strange work which hundreds of men and women have shown.”<sup>37</sup>

One of the highlights of the ceremony occurred when Sgt. Richard Shand of Proctor who had been wounded in New Guinea pinned an “E” on his mother’s dress. Mrs. John Shand had been one of the first women to work in the defense shops.<sup>38</sup>



*Officials involved in the award of the Army/Navy “E” Flag included (l to r) Brigadier General Burton O. Lewis, Redfield Proctor (President of Vermont Marble Company), William H. Wills (Governor of Vermont), Frank Lorraine (President of Independent Marble Workers of Vermont), Major Murray J. B. Wheeler, Captain Robert Henderson, U.S.N (Ret.)*

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Frank Lorraine, President of the Independent Marble Workers of Vermont, and himself a resident of Proctor, spoke on behalf of all workers. "We will remember this day for a very long time and we shall ever cherish and be proud of this award however there is a finer and deeper reason for our pride. That is that, while we, the employees of the VMCO came from many different nations, we were and ever will be, in the hour of our Nation's need, willing and able to meet the obligations of citizenship in democratic America."<sup>39</sup>

Wallace M. Fay was the assistant to Redfield Proctor. His feelings about that day no doubt were expressive of the many attendees who observed the ceremony. "...Parallel to the satisfaction we have in the award is the knowledge that we are backing our own boys for there is probably not one of us who does not have a relative or friend somewhere in the armed services."<sup>40</sup>

To further mark the auspicious honor, Mila A. Collin, a Town poet and wife of the Company's chief engineer, Henry A. Collin, wrote a poem entitled "V.M.CO. Flies the Army-Navy E".

It's a genuine distinction  
To earn an Army-Navy "E",  
And mark of real efficiency  
Proud of it, we should be.  
Our men quarried the white marble  
For the Unknown Soldiers Tomb,  
And we'll help to shape the instruments  
That spell Japs' and Axis doom.  
We have Proctor boys a-serving  
On the land, sea, in the air  
And they're doing their part bravely  
Be the weather foul or fair.  
So we've got to keep producing  
For supplies will win this war  
And by faith we'll join the Victory  
Free men are waiting for.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. VII, No. VI, August 1943, p. 3.

The Company received this honor on three more occasions. In February 1944, Undersecretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, wrote to inform the Company that it had received the Army-Navy Production Award for the second time. This allowed the Company to add a white star to its flags.<sup>42</sup> In the fall of that year the Company once again received this distinction and a second white star was added to its flags.<sup>43</sup> Its final Army-Navy Award was earned in the spring of 1945. Its flags then flew three stars, a testimony to its employees' outstanding achievements in producing materials essential to the war effort.<sup>44</sup>

War work sales in 1943 totaled \$3,614,078.00, a figure that comprised 72% of the Company's total output.<sup>45</sup> The three largest customers that year were: Welin Davit & Boat Co., \$1,695,866.37; Springfield Machine & Foundry Co., \$201,507.30; and Sprague Specialties Co., \$221,815.06.<sup>46</sup>

The Company's Vermont payroll expanded during the war years largely due to the addition of women for the mica department. In 1942 there were 835 employees and the following year the number had grown to 916. During the last two years of the war the figures reached a high of 1257 in 1944 and 1231 at the beginning of 1945.<sup>47</sup> Ninety percent of the plant space in 1944 was devoted to war work and 80.2% of the work was on defense contracts totaling \$5,435,680.00.<sup>48</sup> The three largest customers were Welin Davit & Boat with \$3,314,481.00, Boston Ordnance Office, \$696,686.00, and Sprague Specialties Co. with \$485,321.00.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the encouragement of the federal government the woodworking plant at Florence was never an entirely successful operation. Wallace M. Fay noted in his annual report that the "...aircraft spruce turned out to be a complete failure." It was to be used in wooden aircraft and gliders. He asserted that the whole program was started at the request

---

<sup>42</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII No. I, March 1944, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII No. VIII, October 1944, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. IX No. III, May 1945, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> H. V. Smith, Treasurer's Report, *1943 Annual Report*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report, *1944 Annual Report*, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Henry A. Collin, Report of the Engineering Department, *1944 Annual Report*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> A. T. Howe, General Sales Manager Report, *1944 Annual Report*, pp. 21 and 23.

of the government but it had given the Company little assistance in that regard.<sup>50</sup>

In 1943, however, there were 76 employees, 12 of whom were women, working two ten hour shifts six days a week at the Florence plant. The biggest order this department had in 1944 was \$125,833.38 for box shooks. Early in 1944 it was decided not to accept large orders and to close the operation. By April there were 56 workers, seven of whom were women working at the plant.<sup>51</sup>

There were three new orders in 1944 that are of particular interest. The first contract was with Raytheon of Waltham, MA to assemble cables for radar work, mostly for the Navy. The second contract was for an initial order of 425,000 cartridge storage cases. This came at a particularly critical time since the Liberty Ship engine program ended in June of that year. The third order, while not large, turned out to be the most interesting. The Company received a contract with E. I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. to machine and assemble large units of steel and Masonite for a purpose which, at the time, was veiled in secrecy.

They made the cartridge storing cases in the old exterior shop. This was the first job handled on a true production line basis. Once again, workers exercised their ingenuity and talents to adapt many devices used in the marble business for this job. For example, a conveyer previously used for taking lumber to the monumental shop boxing room, took the metal parts from the freight cars into the shop. There the case bodies were fitted with their parts which were welded on while the separate pieces of the cover were sent through another assembly line. The bodies and the covers came together in the proper proportions at the painting tank where they were dip-painted, then placed on an overhead conveyor which took them through an infrared drying oven and lastly, through the final assembly operation where the cover gaskets were applied and the covers inserted. The completed product passed an electric eye for counting and then proceeded to the dock for loading.<sup>52</sup>

Not only were clever workers needed in the production of the "can job" as it came to be known, but a great deal of improvement in the produc-

---

<sup>45</sup> Wallace M. Fay, Report of Industrial Development and War Work, 1943 Annual Report, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> F. C. Thomas, Florence Woodworking Plant, 1944 Annual Report, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Cartridge Storage Cases, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII, No. VIII, November 1944, p. 1.

tion of the cases occurred when four women from the Florence plant, Helen Poljacik, Mary Poljacik, Mrs. Francis Rantanen, and Pauline Sutkoski, joined the project.<sup>53</sup> Since this information appeared in the *Marble Chips* it appears that women were appreciated as equals and welcomed by the men in the shops.

Maritime and ordnance contracts comprised 85% of the Company's defense work but war business in general was slowing down.<sup>54</sup> Toward the end of 1944 Company representatives, along with 150 manufacturers of ammunition, attended a meeting in St. Louis that was called by the American Division of the Army Ordnance Department. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss procedures that would take place after V-E Day. The Company was informed that the "can job" contract would be cancelled 30 days after that day.<sup>55</sup> War work sales for 1945 reflect the change as the Company began its conversion back to marble. Defense sales for 1945 were \$3,200,000.00, a 55% decrease compared to the previous year.<sup>56</sup>

The Company continued to take pride in its achievements in defense work despite the slowdown that began to occur during the last year of the war. The "can job", still in operation in 1945, achieved a personal best by putting out 2,143 cans in a 10 hour shift and in the same week achieved a record by assembling 10,639 cases in a week. When the war ended, however, the contract was terminated and work stopped on this project on 4 August 1945.<sup>57</sup>

The "Mica Maidens", as they sometimes were referred to, continued to work, thanks to the Raytheon cable job but fewer women were needed. By January 1945 the evening shift had been discontinued save for a few punch operators.<sup>58</sup> When the cable work stopped on 24 August 1945, there was no longer a need for a mica department and it closed a week later.<sup>59</sup>

Shortly after these operations were suspended it was revealed that the secret project for the DuPont Co. was for 120 machined and milled

---

<sup>53</sup> Exterior Shop, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII, No. VII, September 1944, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report, *1945 Annual Report*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> President's Paragraphs, *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII, No. IX, November 1944, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> H. V. Smith, Treasurer's Report, *1945 Annual Report*, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. IX, No. VI, August 1945, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Marble Chips*, Vol. VIII, NO. XI, January 1945, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Treasurer's Report, *1945 Annual Report*, p. 22.

“blocks” that were used for atomic bomb chemicals. In its small way, the Company had a part in the Manhattan project.<sup>60</sup>

The Welin Davit & Boat Co. also concluded its business with the Company but not before passing on a telegram it had received from the Chief of the Bureau of Ships, E. L. Cochrane, Rear Adm. U.S.N. In part it read: “Boat winches of your manufacture have contributed to the outstanding performance of a Navy attack transport which has participated in every amphibious operation in the Pacific from Guadalcanal to Leyte...Such precision in landing operations would not be possible without reliable winches to handle the boats. The Bureau extends thanks to all of you who are helping to provide this vital equipment for our invasion ships.”<sup>61</sup>

In the President’s Report for 1945, Redfield Proctor noted that 203 employees had served in the armed forces, four of whom had either been killed in action or had died of their wounds. These men were: John Carleton, Julius Kish, Winton Hier, and George Popovitch. Those employees who had remained with or rejoined the Company also served the war effort albeit in a different capacity. They could take satisfaction in their achievements and the four Army-Navy “E” Awards. Proctor cited some of what he considered his Company’s greatest accomplishments since starting defense work in 1940.

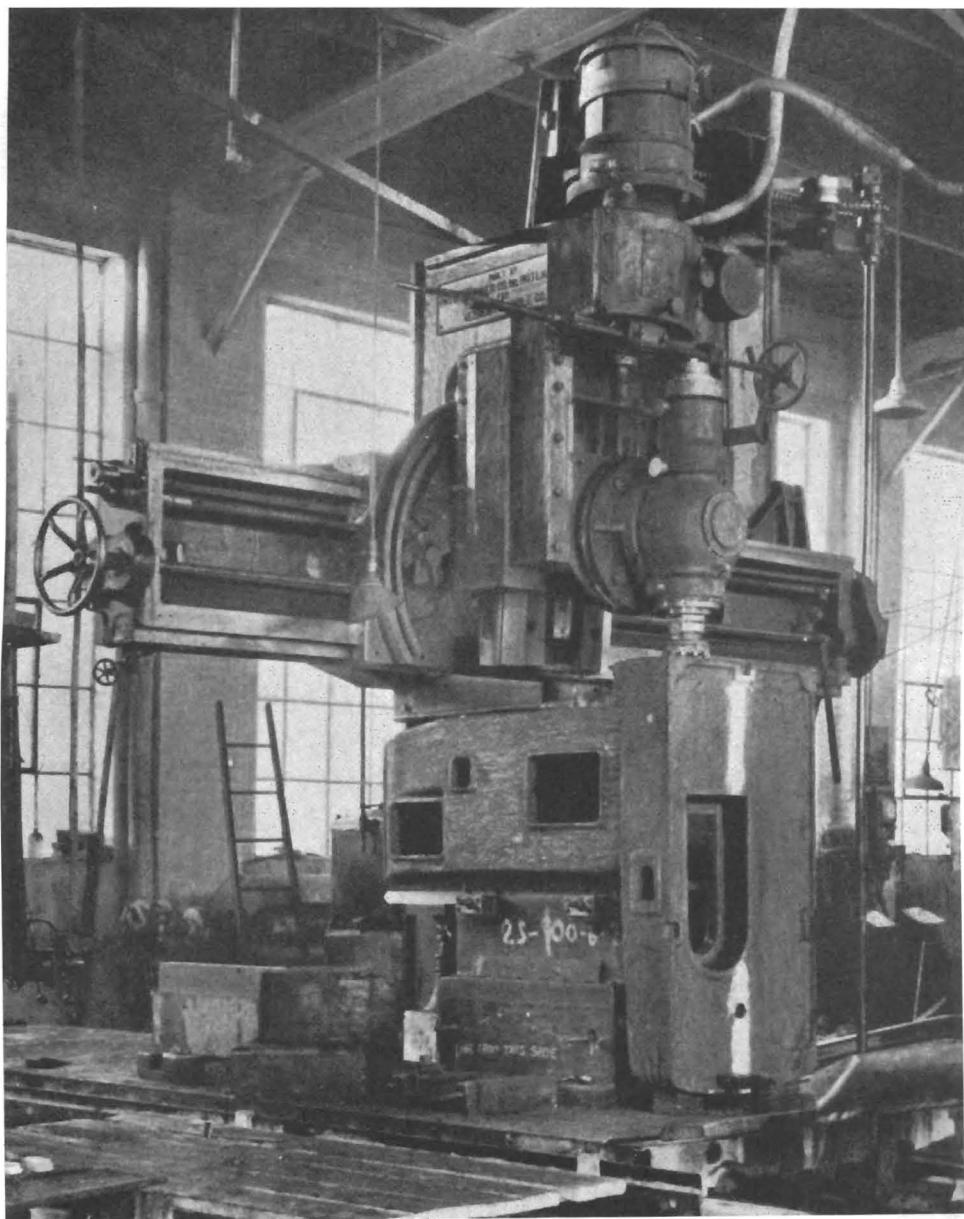
- 300 base assemblies for the 2500 HP reciprocating marine engine, each assembly weighing 40,000 lbs
- 60 gear shapers machined and assembled
- 600,000 cartridge storage cases
- 20 diesel power pumps assembled
- 500 steam whistles machined and assembled
- 3900 winches for the Navy and Maritime
- 10 1200 HP uniflow engines machined and assembled
- 120 so-called “blocks” for atomic bomb chemicals machined and assembled
- 40 winches for seaplane tenders machined and assembled
- 2 permanent molds, the largest ever made in this country for casting the aluminum nose for a jet- propelled bomb
- Mica department graded, split, gauged and punched mica radio condensers, produced 275 million pieces of mica in small assorted rectangular shapes, averaging 400,000 pieces a day
- Radar cables assembled

---

<sup>60</sup> Redfield Proctor, President’s Report, 1945 Annual Report, p. 3.

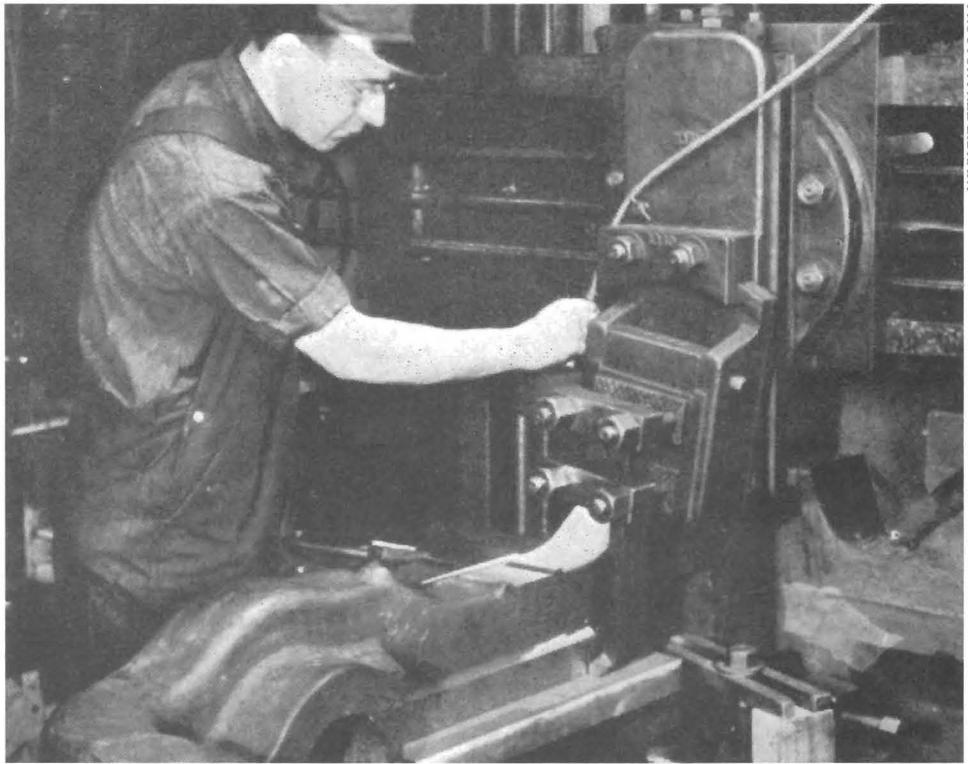
<sup>61</sup> Marble Chips, Vol. IX, No. I, March 1945, p. 9.

They are included here to attest to the remarkable job, once considered impossible by some, which these marble workers and women, turned war workers, achieved as part of their fight in World War II.<sup>62</sup>

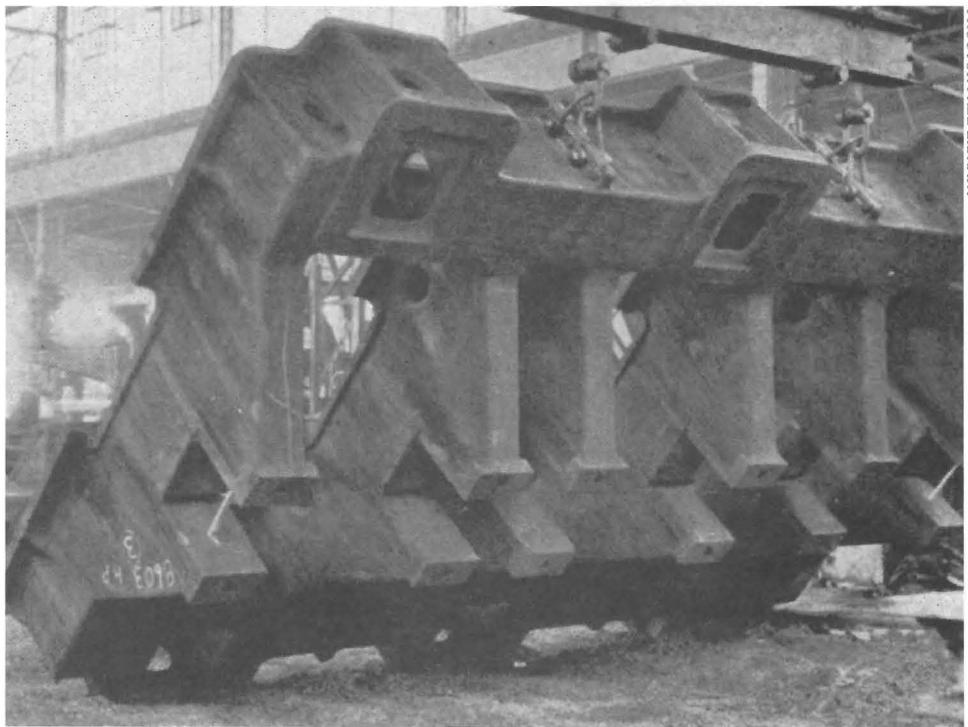


*A huge marble machine converted to metal work stands proudly.*

<sup>62</sup> Redfield Proctor, President's Report, 1945 Annual Report, pp. 2-3.



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

*Small or large it all counted in the great WWII home front effort.*